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Spies Left Out in the Cold

Federal agencies are scrambling for new ideas to deter and detect spies—especially Americans willing to shell out security secrets for cash.

One approach, a measure introduced in the Senate by Sen. Ted Stevens of Alaska, would force spies to forfeit proceeds earned from espionage activities. The bill has been dubbed the "Take the Fun Out of Spying Act."

"We are faced with a new breed of spies, ones who will sell their country down the river for money and kicks," said Sen. Dave Durenberger of Minnesota. "They have no ideology, no beliefs, no goals beyond life in the fast lane. Spying now attracts the same people as drug smuggling."

Among other things, the legislation would force a convicted spy to give up all ill-gotten payoffs and any proceeds from the media seeking to exploit the case. While taking away one potential pot-of-gold, the bill offers another: a \$500,000 reward for information leading to the arrest and conviction of spies.

Some members of Congress said they believe it will take more than cash rewards to deter spying, so they want the death penalty for any person convicted of espionage or treason. Rep. Eldon Rudd of Arizona introduced such a bill last year. "The overwhelming majority of American people believe these crimes are despicable enough to warrant the death penalty," Rudd said, adding that such a penalty is a proven deterrent to spying.